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SOURCE Meditsinskiy Rabotnik, Feb - Apr 1950.

A NEW MEDICAL THEORY PROPOUNDED BY E. D. SPERANSKIY

A new medical theory propounded by E. D. Speranskiy has been discussed in the USSR and has attracted considerable attention. According to a current discussion carried on in the February to April issues of Meditsinskiy Rabotnik, Speranskiy postulates that a pathological process in infective diseases may develop without the participation of its primary causative factor, i.e., the microorganism, virus, or other pathological irritant. According to Speranskiy, pathological processes such as inflammation, degeneration, atrophy, and hypertonia may develop as a result of experimental nervous irritation. A neurogenic irritation which was initially caused by an infective agent may therefore develop and persist, causing a pathological condition in the organism, even in cases where the specific irritant (microorganism, virus, or toxin) is no longer present. Quinine and penicillin cure infective diseases by virtue of their effect on the nerves rather than any specific etiotropic action. ("The Teaching of I. P. Pavlov and Medical Science" by S. Sarkisov, Academician, Secretary, Academy of Medical Sciences USSR, Meditsinskiy Rabotnik, 9 February 1950.)

From a theoretical point of view, this new medical theory has been received favorably by officials representing the Ministry of Health USSR. The Minister of Health, E. I. Smirnov, at the Third All-Union Conference of Leading Workers of the Medical Faculties of Universities, entered the discussion and defended Sarkisov against proponents of the classical theory of medicine. He pointed out that Speranskiy's theory is in complete agreement with dialectic principles and justifiable in its objection to Virchow's interpretation of the organism as a complex of independent cells and organs. He went on to say:

Infection is not the all-important thing, as any physician who has identified gas bacillus in war wounded soldiers, but found no trace of gas gangrene, may testify. In response to the question as to whether the microbe is the causative factor of the disease, a negative answer must be given, even though the disease does not occur without the microbe. Many new things arise in medicine; adherence to an old theory often becomes unjustified. For instance, we have been able to establish recently that many vaccines against diseases, contrary to accepted opinion, really contain microorganisms which have not been killed and are capable of propagation, (Meditsinskiy Rabotnik, 6 April 1950).

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Dr M. Durmish'yan made the following observations:

An organism must be regarded as a unity which is affected and influenced as a whole by external conditions. It is affected by these conditions through the nervous system. The chemotherapeutic agents introduced into the organism transfer their action through reflexes in such a manner that the life and multiplication of microbes becomes impossible. For instance, Speranskiy, by producing a bismuth embolus within the "yoke" vein, was able to prevent tuberculosis in rabbits. Bismuth in this case acted only as an irritant of the nerve-receptor apparatus and increased the resistance of the organism to tuberculosis bacilli by reflex action in this manner. ("National Physiology in Opposition to Cell Pathology," by Dr M. Durmish'yan, Meditsinskiy Rabotnik, 30 March 1950).

Among the nine articles published in Meditsinskiy Rabotnik, several emphatically take issue with the new theory. This includes one by A. Myasnikov, Acting Member, Academy of Medical Sciences USSR. In an article in the 16 March 1950 Meditsinskiy Rabotnik, entitled "Nervism and Soviet Therapy" (nervism being the name of the new theory proposed by Speranskiy), Dr Myasnikov states that vitamins, hormones, and chemotherapeutics may act through the nervous system, but probably do not, because otherwise biochemical specificity (such as that shown by cholesterol in producing arteriosclerosis) remains unexplained.

Dr Myasnikov continues: If Soviet medicine rejects Virchow's concept and regards the organism as a whole, it must consider the interdependence of all tissues and not ascribe any special significance to the nervous system. Sulfa drugs and penicillin very effectively cure pneumonia. There is hardly a physician who would refuse to use these drugs in favor of thombic novocain therapy in the back as A. D. Speranskiy has proposed only recently. Methods of treating septic conditions by a nerve block proved unsuccessful. The neurotropic methods of Speranskiy must be regarded as forms of nonspecific therapy similar to protein therapy or physiotherapy. Nonspecific therapy may supplement, but never replace, treatment with antibiotics, vitamins, or hormones.

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